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## **Federal funding to drive cranberry industry in 2010**

*Local growers thank Obey for pushing for \$1.25M in research grants*

By Nathaniel Shuda • Daily Tribune Staff

Having finished what many expected to be a high-yield harvest, local cranberry growers are looking ahead to the benefits of increased research in 2010.

Although many local cranberry growers already have strong relationships with researchers, a promised boost in federal funding will mean expanded opportunities, said Nicole Hansen, who oversees operations of Cranberry Creek Cranberries in the Juneau County town of Armenia.

"It's a tremendous opportunity for the industry," Hansen said. "We want to remain stewards of the environment while being sustainable and continuing that mission."

Hansen, along with about a dozen other local growers and industry leaders, expressed their thanks Monday to a federal lawmaker for helping to appropriate \$1.25 million in U.S. Department of Agriculture funding next year.

U.S. Rep. Dave Obey, D-Wausau, met with the group while on Thanksgiving recess Monday afternoon at the Ocean Spray Cranberries processing plant in Wisconsin Rapids to hear how the USDA funding will affect the state's largest fruit-exporting industry.

As part of the 2010 federal budget, the cranberry industry will get money for research and development through the USDA Agriculture Research Service offices in Wisconsin and Massachusetts, funding that was reported in October in the Daily Tribune.

"These are exciting and profitable times for the cranberry industry, and we want to keep it going," Obey told growers Monday. "That's why the federal government is partnering with the industry with investments in research ... that will help growers implement new practices to protect and enhance the water resources."

Obey and U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl helped acquire the funds, which will support the creation of two researcher positions at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and another in Massachusetts in the areas of pest management and plant genetics, said Tom Lochner, executive director of the

Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association.

"Those added resources are going to be huge for the industry here in Wisconsin and nationally ... and improve our competitiveness," Lochner said.

Although he expects Wisconsin growers will meet this year's projection of 4 million barrels -- down slightly from last year's record-breaking harvest -- official numbers are not expected until next month, Lochner said.

"We're obviously down from last year's crop, but it's still one of the largest crops we've had," he said. "The weather cooperated (with cooler weather), even though it was a little late to get started."

Original article is located [here](#) .